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Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCE INVESTS IN CLEAN FUEL TECHNOLOGY

VANCOUVER – The Province is investing more than $200,000 in a cross-Canada research project that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, air pollutants and reliance on fossil fuels, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

The Green Energy and Environmentally Friendly Chemical Technologies is a regional project involving the University of British Columbia, the University of Laval in Quebec and the University of Western Ontario that will enhance air quality and produce energy with no harmful emissions.

"This research will not only have a positive impact on the environment but will also develop economically sound solutions to pollution while we continue to build a strong and vital economy in British Columbia," said Coell. "By supporting research projects like this one, B.C. will continue to lead in sustainable environmental management and improve the quality of life in the province."

Project scientists will work with agricultural and forestry wastes that have the potential to be turned into biofuels with limited CO_2 contribution to the atmosphere. In British Columbia, enough wood waste is generated annually to supply ethanol-blended gasoline for all of Western Canada. Pine beetle-killed wood can be converted to bio-oil from which fuel can be extracted, lessening reliance on fossil fuels.

Scientists are also researching ways to alleviate climate change by capturing CO_2 emissions before they enter the atmosphere and by looking for new ways to generate hydrogen for fuel cells. Hydrogen-powered fuel cells have the potential to produce energy much more efficiently than the conventional internal combustion engine. They run silently and their only byproduct is water vapour. However, most hydrogen is made from natural gas and water, producing CO_2 in addition to hydrogen. Researchers are seeking methods to produce hydrogen from diesel, naptha and propane waste products, and to capture CO_2 at the same time, which will improve the environment.

"We've all seen signs that our climate is changing – from devastating storms to longer summer droughts to the warmer winters linked to the current mountain pine beetle epidemic threatening Interior forests," said Environment Minister Barry Penner. "This project is another step forward in our government's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent by 2020."

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Since 2001, a total of 493 projects and over $310 million in funding have been approved by the provincial government under the British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund. This funding has leveraged $334 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and another $263 million from other non-provincial government sources, for a total investment in British Columbia's research infrastructure of over $907 million.

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